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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [EAID](#) [PTER](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: HAMAS APPOINTS NEW "MAYOR" AND CITY COUNCIL IN
GAZA CITY

REF: A. JERUSALEM 104
[1](#)B. 07 JERUSALEM 2522

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Hamas appointed Rafiq Maki, the Hamas chairman of the Gaza City engineers' syndicate, as "Mayor" of Gaza City on March 22, and replaced the municipal council with Hamas sympathizers. The PA-appointed mayor, Majid Abu Ramadan (Independent, appointed by PA President Mahmud Abbas) told PolOff by phone on March 24 that former Hamas Minister Ziad al-Thatha, who selected Maki and several previously unknown Hamas supporters as the city council, has no legal authority to appoint municipal officials. He added that none of the "appointees" have any experience in the Municipality or distinguished careers elsewhere, which does not bode well for city administration. (Note: Al-Thatha, formerly Minister of National Economy, purports to hold the National Economy and Local Government portfolios under former PM Ismayil Haniyah, and claims ministerial authority to replace municipal officials legally appointed by President Abbas. End note).

[1](#)2. (C) Gaza City PLC member Rawiya al-Shawwa (Independent) told PolOff by phone March 24 that Rafiq Maki is a "simple person" whose main qualification in heading the engineers' syndicate is strong Hamas connections. She said none of the appointees are known public figures, but are drawn from most of Gaza's large families in an attempt to gain clan support for the new city leadership. She said Hamas leaders approached members of her prominent al-Shawwa family, but none accepted given that the municipality has no budget, cannot pay municipal worker salaries and has dubious legal status.

Comment

[1](#)3. (C) After months of interference in Municipal affairs and degrading Mayor Abu Ramadan's authority (reftels), Hamas has finished its illegal takeover of the Gaza City municipality by appointing a new mayor and city council. As the appointees are all faction loyalists without experience in city administration, Hamas has virtually guaranteed a further decline in the municipality's capacity to provide its 450,000 residents with critical services.

WALLES